



Comprehensive Community Development

CASE STUDY

Powerful Partnerships Transform Community Impact

GROW SOUTH DAKOTA

CCD PRINCIPLES HIGHLIGHTED:



INTENTIONAL APPROACH



COMMUNITY DRIVEN



LAYERED STRATEGIES



GUIDING VISION & PLAN



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS



COORDINATED LEADERSHIP



LAYERED INVESTMENT

KEY INSIGHTS

- By leveraging partnerships and a collaborative approach, GROW SD facilitates development and investment in rural areas and addresses housing shortages.
- GROW SD's community arts and economic development initiatives have bolstered housing development and created vibrant public spaces, enhancing cultural identity and community cohesion.
- The multilayered strategy of integrating housing, economic development, and community engagement has created a sustainable model for rural development, demonstrating the power of strong partnerships.

Overcoming Rural Challenges Through Collaboration

A lack of affordable housing units is often associated with big cities, but this issue also affects rural areas, where geographically isolated communities face unique challenges in identifying sustainable solutions. For over 50 years, GROW South Dakota (GROW SD) has successfully addressed these challenges by developing collaborative partnerships that provide access to funding and expertise.

Although GROW SD is a state-wide organization, it has focused on a new housing development initiative in its own backyard of Sisseton, integrating economic development and community engagement. Creating and sustaining growth in rural areas requires innovative approaches, and through these efforts, GROW SD has significantly improved the quality of life and economic stability in rural communities across the state.

Addressing Housing Needs: The Foundation of Economic Growth

Like many communities, Sisseton faces significant gaps in available housing, impeding economic development.

“The school district struggles to get teachers because there’s no housing,” said GROW SD CEO Lori Finnesand. “The hospital struggles to get staff, and the large manufacturers struggle with employees due to the housing shortage.”

When a community group offered lots for sale to the Sisseton Economic Development Corporation (SEDC), they seized the opportunity to develop them to stimulate housing growth. After SEDC secured a low-interest rate loan from the City of Sisseton for the lot purchases, GROW SD was approached to assist with the effort. The City of Sisseton does not have dedicated housing development staff, so GROW SD was brought in to provide the sales, marketing, technical assistance and expertise in preparing the lots for sale that are vital to the development’s success. GROW SD’s longstanding presence and partnerships in the community, along with experience in developing housing projects gave them the proven background and knowledge for the job. GROW SD also leveraged its partnerships with NeighborWorks America and the South Dakota Community Foundation to drive the initiative forward.

“We were looking for a partner with experience,” said Sisseton Mayor Terry Jaspers. “Grow South Dakota has proven their ability to be knowledgeable about housing development in our community.”

From Study to Strategy: Identifying and Meeting Housing Demand

Securing community buy-in for the development was essential. A series of meetings were held which included residents,

“The school district struggles to get teachers because there’s no housing. The hospital struggles to get staff, and the large manufacturers struggle with employees due to the housing shortage.”

—LORI FINNESAND
CEO, GROW SD



local officials, and representatives from entities such as the school district, hospital and large local manufacturers, to address expectations for buildings and price points, ensuring transparency and alignment with community needs.

GROW SD assisted the city in obtaining grant funding for a housing study that identified a shortage of more than 80 housing units in Sisseton. These findings demonstrated the potential for residential growth in Sisseton, inspiring GROW SD to market the SEDC-purchased lots to developers who would readily understand the potential market opportunities.

Navigating Challenges: Overcoming Developer Hesitation and Rising Costs

Despite marketing efforts challenges have arisen, particularly in mitigating developer risk due to the rural location. Most developers are located in bigger towns and prefer to work in their immediate vicinity, where demand is higher and profit margins are more favorable. This remains a major obstacle to increase development in rural areas.



GROW SD built upon their knowledge and success from working with local contractors to construct and sell three houses in 2017 and forged ahead, building two homes on the lots to further stimulate market interest. The aim was to encourage other developers to continue the development by demonstrating an active project with strong consumer interest.

The Power of Partnerships: Extending Beyond Housing

The development of the two existing homes has generated the needed optimism in securing developer commitments. However, GROW SD's collaborative approach goes far beyond housing development. Additional partnerships and efforts in community engagement and economic development have reinforced and supported their overall development strategy.

Partnerships with entities such as the Sisseton–Wahpeton Oyate tribe on the Lake Traverse Reservation surrounds the City of Sisseton, play a crucial role in supporting development. GROW SD provides digital literacy and small business assistance to tribal members and have helped more than 20 individuals through a small business development program that provides financing for their businesses. GROW SD also collaborates with the local tribal homebuyer program, providing comprehensive education and resources for residents. In addition, they offer in-person and online homebuyer education throughout South Dakota, reinforcing their commitment to making homeownership more accessible to everyone.

GROW SD has also spearheaded public arts initiatives. They collaborated with the community and local artists to create several murals, creating momentum around public arts in Sisseton. Today, more than 20 community-produced public artworks have been created in Sisseton and are featured in a Sisseton Arts Map for a DIY tour. These initiatives have significantly contributed to placemaking, developing public spaces that enhance community identity and cohesion while fostering

a more attractive and vibrant environment for existing and potential residents. Integrating arts into community development has also supported local artists, providing them with platforms to showcase their work and generate income.

A Model for Rural Development

Rural development faces unique challenges, often requiring organizations to take on more upfront work to spark interest. However, GROW SD's multilayered approach and strategic partnerships effectively overcome these obstacles.

The housing development in Sisseton, enhanced by community and economic development initiatives, is a testament to the power of collaboration and the impact that investing in multiple areas can have on improving an entire region. By bringing together community residents, officials, business owners, and entities to meet the community's needs, GROW SD's strategy amplifies the impact of their efforts and serves as a valuable model for other rural areas. Demonstrating that strong partnerships can lead to significant success.

"Their main underlying goal at Grow South Dakota is to keep facilitating change for the better for the community. And they're doing just that," said Mayor Jaspers.

LEARN MORE

- [Learn about GROW South Dakota.](#)
- [Read more about their Sisseton housing project.](#)
- [View a summary their work with the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe](#)